



King County

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Solid Waste Division

## HAZARDS ON THE HOMEFRONT -MINI GRANT REPORT

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ST. LUKE SCHOOL—7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE SCIENCE CLASSES



### **What was the project? Describe the project and the goal.**

A native plants garden was researched, designed, and planted by seventh grade students at St. Luke School. The goals included teaching about the hazards of chemical use in the environment, using safer alternatives to pesticides, practicing natural methods of planting and maintaining the garden, and providing a natural setting to be enjoyed by the school community for years to come.

### **Who was involved?**

All seventh grade students worked on the project. Fifty-seven students in two science classes were directly involved in planning and planting the garden. The entire student body, 421 students, 26 staff members, the 57 families of the seventh grade class, the parents of our general student population, school visitors, and some parishioners have been affected by the project as it has made a visible difference to the entrance of the school.

### **What was the project outcome? Was the goal accomplished?**

The outcome of the project was multi-fold with many goals being accomplished. The garden was successfully planted and enhances the school grounds tremendously with positive comments received on a daily basis from parents and community members. Students are now more knowledgeable about the negative affects of pesticides in the environment. The seventh grade class has taken ownership of the garden, doing maintenance as needed. The students are now educated about native plants of the Pacific Northwest and know how to use resources to pursue further knowledge about native plants. Many students had their first opportunity at gardening, digging in the dirt to remove non-native plants and planting native ones in their spot. There was much excitement in the process of just digging in the dirt and working with the compost.



**What changes about household hazardous products or waste resulted from the project, if any?**

Tying the knowledge about composting and its uses to keep chemicals out of the garden was enlightening for my classes. For a science fair held this spring, many students did experiments to test the use of non-toxic household products for cleaning purposes in place of hazardous products and found positive results. I believe many school families now consider options to hazardous products now that their children are educating them about less toxic alternatives.

**How did you use the funds?**

The funds were used on materials that included plants, compost, top mulching, and signage for the plants. Each student group planted native shrubs after researching plants that fit the shady garden conditions.

**Would you recommend this project to other teachers? Why or why not?**

I highly recommend this project to other teachers. I was able to tie the garden project directly to the environmental unit taught in my seventh grade science classes. The hands-on experience was very satisfying for my students. They learned the value of using natural products and appreciated this once they realized the devastation that chemicals cause to wildlife, the environment and ultimately to themselves. This project allowed the parents the chance to help out in a middle school classroom and brought them into the school, promoting community building. I received support in the form of speakers, resource information, and encouragement from King County Department of Natural Resources Solid Waste Division which helped this to be a very positive and fulfilling experience.